



Don Bardole, park ranger, Mississippi River Visitor Center, discusses the day's "lessons learned" with PWC workshop participant Greg Hunter, Illinois Department of Natural Resources.

# Personal Watercraft Behind

## Story and photos by Mark Kane

**T**he Rock Island District in cooperation with the Personal Watercraft Industry Association co-sponsored a personal watercraft workshop behind the Mark of the Quad Cities on the Mississippi River, August 29.

The educational workshop provided an opportunity for federal, state, and local agencies, along with industry representatives, to discuss the issues and findings of recent Corps of Engineers/PWIA nationwide workshops.

"With the increasing popularity of personal watercraft on our rivers and lakes, this recreational sport has tremendously challenged traditional recreation management efforts," said John Punkiewicz, Operations Division.

"The Corps has been working with the PWIA on a number of initiatives in other parts of the country to address and resolve the impacts of personal watercraft use," said Punkiewicz. "The workshop provided a unique opportunity for Corps personnel, other government entities, state and local boating law enforcement agencies, and local PWC suppliers to meet face-to-face with industry personnel to discuss specific issues related to the impacts of personal watercraft activities on our waters."

Don Bardole, park ranger, Mississippi River Visitor Center, patrolled the waterway while workshop participants tested out a personal watercraft, some for the first time.

"For the people that are in enforcement they're learning about what it's like to ride a PWC as a beginner and some of the differences between operating a boat and a PWC," said Bardole. "In a boat you can still steer if you lose power, if you lose power in a PWC it's dead in the water. They're also learning that a


PWC can float in extremely shallow water and we can't get in there with our boats to help them. A PWC will draft at about eight inches, while our boats draft at about 2.5 feet of water."

After only a couple of minutes of riding a PWC, most of the participants understood why the watercraft are so popular and why the public tend to get into trouble while using them.

"It's so easy to accelerate and so hard to slow down," said Emily Bowen, park ranger, Lake Red Rock. "This helps me sympathize with the public just a little bit. There's a lot of 'wave runners' at Lake Red Rock and sometimes they cause trouble."

Currently District park rangers don't use personal watercraft for enforcement, but Kevin Ewbank, lead park ranger, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center, feels they should.

"There's a lot of emphasis on community policing and having the ability for a ranger to approach a crowd using a PWC, as opposed to one of our big boats, is much friendlier," said Ewbank.

"We could use them to get out to the public more readily and educate them on the safety of how to use a PWC," said Ewbank. "That's an important use for them, not for chasing people down in shallow water, which maybe the perception of why we want them so much." 







Kevin Ewbank, lead park ranger, Illinois Waterway Visitor Center, bumps up his PWC experience a couple notches.

# tercraft Training Behind the Scenes



Shawn Meyer, Iowa Department of Natural Resources, pulls away from the Corps of Engineers boat on scene to continue his PWC training.